

The Huge Possession via Poor Development of Tourism in Arbaminch and Its Surroundings, Southern Ethiopia

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Abstract

Fundamentally, the main purpose of this study is conduct survey study so as to make public the degree to which Arbaminch and its surroundings, has plentiful tourist attraction sites. This study unearth that due to reason that no adequate research work has not been carried out in the area and eventually most of this attractions are not made public to both domestic and foreign visitors exaggerated the development of tourism in the area. It recommends the safeguarding of the valuable tourism resource in Arbaminch could be used as sources of earnings that would be generated from tourists visiting the destination. Because of its location in Refit Valley Region, Arbaminch area is naturally exceptional area where many potential tourism sites are found. Unluckily, findings of the work unearths, having such and other crucial tourism sites, Arbaminch and its surrounding barely managed to produce good income. This due to reason that the absences of adequate research works in the study area coupled with lack of trained man power, weak awareness's of the local community, lack of infrastructural facilities, and weak promotional activity in the area. Thus, the employers of cultural and tourism office of Arbaminch zone, national and regional government, the local people and other pertaining bodies ought to vigorously involved in the area from injure.

Keywords: Tourism development, resources, attraction, heritage

INTRODUCTION

Globally, the tourism industry is recognized as one of the biggest sector in the world economy. As stated by different scholars and writers, the tourism sector has a crucial role in developing the economies, social and cultural aspect of one's country (Leonard J. Lickorish and Carson L. Jenkins, 1997: 63; Arthur Pedersen, 2002: 11). Some of the major positive socio-economic impacts of tourism include economic benefits, cross-cultural exchange, creating employment opportunity, conservation of historic sites and improvement of infrastructures. The negative impacts include a negative effect on the host society's culture and moral behavior, the expansion of prostitution, the increase in alcoholism, theft of heritages or the expansion of crime (Lickorish and Carson L. Jenkins, 1997: 63-66; Pedersen, 2001, 30-33).

For many of the poorer countries in the world tourism has become a major input to their development process. The country, Ethiopia is one of the few countries in Africa being endowed with various natural, cultural, and historical heritages. According to World Bank, Ethiopia become the home for and owner of different endemic wildlife, histories and natural resources. But its tourism development was in its infancy stage. The change in governance system and development policy, lack of trained man power, finance, knowledge, weak promotional activity and management capacity attributed for low level development of the sector in the country (Leonard J. Lickorish and Carson L. Jenkins, 1997: 208; World Bank, 2006: 16-18).

Methods and Material

The present study is written based on both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include archives and oral informants. The researcher gathered several archives from different offices and individuals. It is understandable that, the use of such types of source in conducting study need great personal effort and will increase the credibility of one's work. In addition to get the desired information, the researcher utilized other supply of valuable oral accounts beside books and articles. The oral accounts were asked several open-end questions assessing the potential tourism resources of the area. Focused group discussion is the other way that the researcher used to acquiring relevant information. To deal with this research, the information which obtained through various ways is equally sought and analyzed. The findings of this work are discussed below through storyline and descriptive approaches.



Figure 1: Goa Public Place (Dubbusha). Source: Gamo Gofa zone culture and tourism office, 2017.

Discussion and Result

The area Arbaminch and its surroundings is one of the tourist's destination sites in Ethiopia. The area has rich in tourism resources. However, due to lack adequate researcher work, the enormous tourism resources of the area are not studied well and this resulted for the under development of the tourism sector in the area. Thus, this study will assess some potential resources of tourism in Arbaminch and its surroundings and it will recommend the local communities, the area tourism and cultural experts and policy makers. These are discussed briefly as the following.

Dubbusha (Public Places)

According to the information of the Central Statistics Agency, the Gamo and Gofa ethnic groups are the largest ethnic groups inhabiting the area of Arbaminch and its surrounding. These ethnic groups are the owner of different culture, tradition and customs as it is was true for other ethnic group in Ethiopia.

Dubbusha is one of the traditional places that serve for respective communities, villages or religious rituals, blessings, public meetings, dances, mourning, place for acquiring title and place where successful men or big game-hunters show them to the members of their communities. They are also places where "Male stones" are erected to commemorate successful hunt men, places where truth is spoken and said, places where symbolic sacrifices of plants are occasionally carried and finally, it was the place where warring community or community that have disputes make peace.

There are three types of Dubbusha these are:

- i. Dere Dubbusha, (attached to market places)
- II. Guta Dubbusha, (serving a neighborhood)
- III. Qome Dubbusha (serving the whole community).

The Dubbusha are very much respected places. Whoever passes across or by the side of a Dubbusha was expected to sit for seconds as a sign of respect. In general the public places are places where the socio-economic, cultural and economic issues of the community are discussed. They also created greater tolerance of social differences.

The area of Arbaminch and its surroundings is also residence for a numeral of caves, church and monasteries. Different caves are found in different parts of the town and the town surrounding places. These are Tuwato cave, Manko and Golo cave, Karza and Womba cave, Dada cave, Posä, Toso Ketha and Shalshe and Sena cave, Shalshe Ganaze. Both the Tuwato, Golo, Possa, Sena caves are found in one of Arba Minch *Woreda* called Boreda. The rest of the caves where found in different parts of the town and the town surrounding areas or *Woreda*. In general, these caves had played different role and has had different symbols which expresses the different things or traditions of the past society of the town and the town surrounding communities.



Figure 3: The Wuhe Amo Cave. Source: Gamo Gofa Zone Tangible and Non Tangible Heritages, 2007.

For instance, in the cave of Manko there was a chair like stone which was important for sitting and this cave has had important in protecting and served as a shelter for society during conflict time with the neighbours. Similarly to Manko cave, the Shalshe Ganaze cave had different purpose. To list some, it serves as a worship place. When disease and hunger occurs in the community, the selected elders or the (Bitanete) make a journey to this cave and made a scurfy and pray for peace and prosperity of their community to the sprite full stone which was found in the cave. It was believed that, after this cultural practice the disease and hunger occurred in the society was disappears. The distinct future of this cave or what makes this cave different from the rest of other caves that, for girls it is not permitted to exist in the cave or near to the cave.



Figure 3: The Birbir St. Mary Monastery. Source: Gamo Gofa Zone Tangible and Non Tangible Heritages, 2007.

However, due to the existence some of the caves in private agricultural land coupled with inaccessibility of these sites because the lack of infrastructures and different services, the vulnerability of caves to tourists and tourism development to the area was too minimal. Such problems were not serious if they are considered, but because of the weakness regional government and the Gamo Gofa Zone Tourism and Culture Department, the problem of infrastructures and service became far above the ground.

The Birbir St. Mary Monastery

The monastery of Birbir St. Mary is one of the oldest monasteries in southern Ethiopia. Many asserted that, the monastery of Birbir St. Mary was one of the ancient well known monasteries for its ancient holy relics and was established around 400 years before Christ. The monastery of Birbir St. Mary is situated in Merab Abaya Woreda in Gamo Gofa Zone. The monastery was known by its ancient holy relics. It was also the home for ancient Bellum books, silver holy cross and different gift materials from earlier kings.

The Meskel Festivity

The area of Arbaminch and its surroundings were also the owner for various intangible heritages. One of which is the *Meskel* festivity among the Gamo Gofa people. Especially the Dorze celebration of *Meskel* ceremony was known by its high foreign visitors in Arbaminch Zone. *Meskel* (Ge'ez: መስቀል) is one of the annual religious holidays in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church to commemorate the discovery of the true cross by the Roman Empress Helena (Saint Helena) in the fourth century. The festival of *Meskel* occurs on the 17, *Meskerem* in Ethiopian calendar or September, 27, in Gregorian calendar.

According to oral informants, *Meskle* was one of the greatest festivals of the year among other ceremonies in Arbaminch and its surrounding areas. This is because, the whole people in diffident part of the town highly pay attention to welcome and celebrate this festival through different preparation of local drinks, cutting pile of grasses to domestic animals, Damera or Chibo (Xomppe, in local term) and grains for food preparation. The peoples celebrate the festival by saying 'Maskala Yoo...Yoo...Yoo' meaning that happy *Meskle* celebration. In addition, because of its high number of visitors, the festivity is considered as one of the non- tangible tourism resource in the area. Before the celebration of *Meskel*, peoples of the area prepare themselves early before the annual *Meskel* ceremony. They start saving money and other important items through Edir or Ekub After completing those preparations, the people celebrate *Meskel* in their public areas (Dubbusha) by firing the Demera. In different parts of Arbaminch, the people celebrate for one or two weeks, for instance, in Dorze and Goffa peoples, the festivity lasts for two weeks.

Stele

In different parts of Arbaminch, there are a number of steles. These steles hold and express the socio-cultural aspects of the communities in symbolic form. Most of the time, these steles display the heroicness of one person and famous kings of the area or (Betaneti, in Local term) and respected chiefs and leaders.



Figure 4: The Tubba stele. Source: Gamo Gofa Zone Tangible and Non Tangible Heritages, 2007.

Nech Sar National Park

Nech Sar National Park is one of the national parks in Ethiopia. The park consists of different types of vegetation, savanna grass land, bush land and ground water forests. The park was also the home for various specious of bird and animal, Swayne's hartebeest and Burch 'ells Zebra. Furthermore, the par was the home for different specious of fish and crocodile. Like Chamo and Abaya was also one of the wonders of Nech Sar National Park. The park covers an area of 514km² of which 436km² was covered by land and the remaining area, 78km² was water. The park is situated in between Arbaminch Zuria *Woreda* and Amaro Special *Woreda*. According to informants, even though the park is a habitat for different specious of animal, bird and natural attraction, its contribution is too minimal for the development of tourism in the area of Arbaminch and its surrounding as it was expected.



Figure 5: Abaya Lake (the greatest Refit Valley Lake). Source: <https://www.google>, Retrieved on, January, 3,12,2017.

This was due to the increasing in number of illegal settlement of peoples in the park, hunting, and deforestation, lack of infrastructures and the unfair distribution of economic benefits among the park surrounding communities. Comparing to others sectors, the tourism sector needs fewer amounts of capital and human resources. But, it cost less comparing to others sector, because the fixed assets of tourism was nature. Therefore, because of such reason the sector was much profitable than other sectors. By considering this view, the concerning bodies should give emphasis to those problems and prospects.

Conclusion

Because of its location in Refit Valley region, the Arbaminch area is naturally gifted area where many potential tourism sites are found. The Birbir St. Mary Monastery, Public Place (Dubbusha), Nech Sarr National Park, Meskel Festivity, Caves and steles are some insights. The Birbir St. Mary Monastery was believed to have been established around 400 years before Christ. It was known by its ancient holy relics. It was also the home for ancient Bellum books, silver holy cross. Dubbusha is the other impressive tourist sites in Arbaminch area. As it was places where different traditions of the community such as public meetings, religious rituals, blessings, dances, mourning, place for acquiring title is manifest at large and attended by a number people. Nech Sarr National Park is the other tourism resources of Arbaminch area. The park is the dwelling for several specious of bird and animal. And is the owner for wonderful natural attractions like Lake Abaya (the great refit valley lake) and Lake Chamo.

The Meskel Festivity is other fascinating ceremony celebration every Meskerem 17in Arbaminch area. It is attended by thousands of people of Arbaminch and surroundings. This festivity brings every member of the community in one common area and creates a sense of oneness.

Mentioning these examples of tourism resource, it is possible to terminate that the area of Arbaminch is endowed with natural reward that help for tourism development. Nevertheless, their prospective tourism resources are not utilized properly for the development of the sector in the study area. Because of the reason that, those tourism resources are not made public both to foreigner and domestic tourists and the lack of adequate studies in the area resulted for the low level development of the tourism sector in the Arbaminch area. This work attempts to address these problems and become the fundamental references for researchers and government bodies like policy makers.

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